

THE DABBS FAMILY

Little is known of the early life of Charley Dabbs that married the half-sister of John W. White and bought land in Pine Springs. To the White family, he had always been colorful Uncle Charley, and never talked much about his early upbringing.

Myrtie White Love, John's daughter, did recall that as a girl she had heard that Uncle Charley had come from Kemper County as a young boy, following the death of his father. His father had been killed by a black man and Charley had been brought to Meridian where he was raised by his uncle, Mark Dabbs.

In the 1860 census of Kemper County there are only two houses that had any Dabbs family listed. One of the houses had two unmarried Dabbs men living alone, both giving their occupations as printers. Their names are Samuel H. and Deck Dabbs. The other house is the home of Bob Dabbs and his wife Ann. Bob Dabbs was 23 and apparently they have just married as they have no children - yet. *Robert Fought & Co. A, 35th Ms. Regt in Civil War, was wounded @ Corinth, Ms.*

On page 12 of the second edition of Captain Guy Jack's Iconoclast, written and then published in a private printing by Capt. Guy Jack to expose the corrupt practices of the public officials during the reconstruction days following the Civil War, there is this account:

'.....Walter Riley, a mulatto, murdered Captain Bob Dabbs, who was a bartender in a Democratic saloon in DeKalb, owned by Captain John W. Gully and others. W.W. Chisolm and his clan owned a Republican saloon on another street. Walter Riley shot Captain Dabbs while he was standing in the light of the front door of the saloon. Riley himself was in the dark, only a few feet away. Captain Dabbs was a brave Confederate soldier, and great friend and admirer of Captain Gully. It was generally thought that Chisolm and Rosenbaum had Riley to murder Dabbs because of his bravery and friendship for Captain John W. Gully. Chisolm being sheriff and Rosenbaum deputy sheriff, they easily aided the negro in making his escape. Instead of attempting the negro's capture, as they would have done in the case of any Republican murdered, they abetted his escape.....

.....I was given these facts by Rev. F. M. Pool, once a prominent Baptist minister of Kemper County who, like 'Old Dog Tray', got into bad company by associating with Chisolm and Rosenbaum and their set....."

In 1877, Walter Riley was hung for the murder of Captain Dabbs and also for Capt. John W. Gully's assassination.

In the 1880 census of Lauderdale County, there appears in Sub-division #1, House # 43, Mark Dabbs, 37 years old, a widower, born in Alabama, with three children in the household. There is Virgy, his 3 year old daughter, Mark, a 4 year old son, and CHARLEY DABBS, his 13 year old nephew!!

It seems that Myrtie White Love knew what she was talking about!!

We still do not know the name of the Dabbs brothers' father and mother, although Mark Dabbs gave their birthplaces as North Carolina and Virginia.

-
1. This W.W. Chisolm had relatives who later moved to Pine Springs to escape the Gully-Chisolm feud in 'Bloody Kemper' and are listed in this book.

The Dabbs Brothers:

I. SAMUEL H. DABBS

Born: 1835, Alabama

Married: (?)

Was a printer, lived in DeKalb, Kemper County, Miss. in 1860.

Children: Unknown.

Died: From WOUNDS ON ATLANTA battlefield

Co. A.
35th
Regt

II. ROBERT "BOB" DABBS

Born: 1837, Alabama

Died: 1877, Kemper County, Ms.

Married: ANN (b.1842, SC) around 1859-60.

Apparently served with distinction in the Confederate Army in the Civil War where he was made a Captain. Returned home to Kemper County at the end of the war to find things in a turmoil of reconstruction. He got a job as bartender in a saloon in DeKalb. The saloon was owned by John Gully, arch-enemy of carpet-bagger W. W. Chisolm. A hired gunman, Walter Riley, shot and killed Bob as he stood in the lighted doorway of the saloon. Later an assassin waylaid John Gully as he was on his way home. and killed him, too. The citizens were in an uproar and accused Chisolm of hiring the gunman. The sheriff arrested Chisolm and placed him in the DeKalb jail where a mob shot and killed Chisolm. Chisolm's son and daughter were also killed in the melee. Walter Riley was tried, convicted and hung for the murder of Dabbs and Gully.

Capt. Bob Dabbs had a son, Charles Dabbs, born in 1867 following the Civil War. Where was Charley and his mother, Ann Dabbs, while all this was going on? Charley must have been about 10 years old when his father died. After Bob dabbs' death, Charley was sent to Meridian in Lauderdale County to live with his uncle Mark. What had happened to his mother?

There are many questions that still remain unanswered.

Children:

1. CHARLES H. "CHARLEY" DABBS 1867-1918, m. Lee Anna Radford, dau. of Mary Jane Wedgeworth, whose second husband had been Lee Anna's father. Mary Jane had nursed Mr. Radford throughout a long illness that had resulted in his death. She then married John James White of Obediah, who reared Lee Anna Radford as his own child.

Charley Dabbs story will follow.

III. "DECK" DABBS (SAMUEL HENRY?)

Born; 1841, Alabama

Died:

Married: (?)

Was a printer, unmarried, 19 years old, living in DeKalb just before Civil War in 1860.

Children: Unknown.

IV. MARK DABBS

Born: 1843, Alabama

Died:

Married: _____, a girl from Arkansas who died between 1876 and 1880.

Lived in Meridian in 1880. He took his brother's son, Charley Dabbs, in and raised him after Charley's father died.

Children:

1. VIRGY DABBS 1874-

2. MARK DABBS, JR. 1876-

m. Maude A. Cann, 1906

E

WORKED @
Marks - Retreating store
until he retired in 1910.
His fellow
workers gave
him a watch.

Capt. Bob Dabbs
was wounded at
Canton, Miss.

WAS IN
Co. A,
35th
Regiment

CHARLEY DABBS

To the children of John W. White, Uncle Charley Dabbs had been around ever since they could remember. He and Aunt Lee Dabbs lived 'in town' and it was always time for laughter and celebration whenever they came out to the farm on Sundays to visit. Most of the times they brought presents when they drove up in their fancy buggy and Aunt Lee always smelled nice, likes violets, maybe. Uncle Charley didn't wear work pants like Papa did, but always had on a fancy suit. He liked to sit around and smoke his big cigars and talk to Papa. Someone said that Uncle Charley owned a pawn shop, but they didn't know whether to believe that or not. What's a pawn shop?

Then in 1907 there was lots of talk about Uncle Charley going to be a banker. The new Merchant and Farmer Bank had opened and Uncle Charley was going to be a Vice President! Uncle Charley told John White that he should get a bigger farm, and he would be on the look-out for one that would do. John's family was getting bigger all the time and he was going to need more land if he wanted to make a decent living - isn't that right, John?

In 1908 Charley had found just the place for their farm, over at Pine Springs. Their brother-in-law, Charley Rubush, owned a 500 acre farm with a nice house on it. It was good flat land and had Rodgers Creek going right through it, would make a mighty fine place. Course, Rubush hadn't done much with it because he lived in town and had someone else running the place. That wasn't the way to do. Charley Dabbs wanted to buy the place and give John White a half interest in it. Then John would be in fact working his own land and would do a better job. Why, Charley and Lee, they'd just take one room in the house so they could come out on weekends, and everything would work out fine. What do you say, John?

On April 11, 1908, Charles H. Dabbs. bought land in in the southwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 3, the northeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 9 and in the west half of Section 10 of Township 7, Range 15E in the community of Pine Springs from Charles M. Rubush. That same day, Charles Dabbs wrote and signed a deed for the same land to his wife, Lee A. Dabbs and her brother, John W. White.

John and Lidia White moved to Pine Springs that year, into the house that had been built by E.G.Gibbens back in the 1870's. The White family had grown considerably by the time they moved from Obediah and was still growing at the rate of a new baby every other year. By placing all the boy's beds in a big shed room - dubbed the Bullpen - there was enough space in the house for Charley and Lee to have their private bedroom in which to stay when they came on weekends.

Charley and Lee Dabbs were childless and the White offspring served to take the place of the children they never had. Uncle Charley begged John to let him take his oldest son, Ernest, to live with the Dabbs in Meridian to be sent to school where he could be properly educated. Charley said he would teach Ernest the banking business and someday he could take over after Charley had been 'put out to grass'. But John couldn't give up his boy. As the biggest, Ernest was a lot of help about the farm and John not only depended on him for labor, but father and son had also become friends and partners. No, John couldn't give up one of his younguns.

Charley and Lea had a fine home on 20th Street, near Highland Park in Meridian. They traveled a lot to various places, even at one time taking the 'Grand Tour' of Europe. Everywhere they went they bought something to

bring back to Mississippi; bric-a-brac, objets d'art, an occasional expensive piece of furniture. Lee was always on the look-out for new plants that she thought might grow back home in her flower garden.

The Dabbs automobile was the first that had ever been brought out to Pine Springs. One fine fall day Charley and Lee came driving out over the bumpy roads from town to show off their newest acquisition. They came driving up the Pine Springs Road and made their first stop at Ratcliff's Store where they went in the Ratcliff home to visit Lee's sister, Juel Ratcliff. School happened to be in session at the Pine Springs School across the road but seeing that she was unable to hold her class's attention, the teacher turned her students out to go over to see the automobile.

The machine was a White Touring Car, fire-engine red, and to tell the truth, it looked almost as big as a fire engine. The canvas top was laid back and by peeping inside the spectators could see the finely stitched black leather seats. The back seat was higher than the two (bucket) seats in front where the driver sat to guide the machine with his lever. The engine was in the back, mostly under the back seat, and turned the vehicle's wheels with a chain. Oh, it was quite a marvel!

Bud, who worked for Uncle Charley and Aunt Lee in Lee's flowers and about the house, was the son of Jerry White, a former slave of Grandpa White's over at Obediah. On this occasion he sported a new chauffeur's uniform and you'd have thought the automobile was his, he was that proud. He hovered around the automobile, wiping at the brass trim on the big carbide lamps, keeping a watchful eye less one of them white chillun forgot hisself and tried to tech somethin'.

In a bit the Dabbs came out to be helped into the back seat, adjusted their goggles (the car had no windshield), and Bud drove off down the hill, headed over to John White's house. The students went back to their books, feeling a little important because they had actually seen one of those automobiles they had been hearing about. They had witnessed a modern marvel.

As John White family grew, the Pine Springs farmhouse began to bulge at the seams. Uncle Charley kept after John to build himself a fancy new home. With the coming of World War I the times were good, the price of cotton had gone up, John was making good on his farm - there was no reason for them not to have a fine new house as befitted his standing in the community. Now you know I'm right, John. Think about it.

John just couldn't see spending all that money. He and Lidia were doing all right at the time, but he could remember when their row had been a lot tougher to hoe. He couldn't see spending all that money when they weren't doing too badly the way they were going. Sure, they were a mite crowded but they all enjoyed each others company and they had good times together. Maybe later, Charley.

One weekend the Dabbs came out as usual and enjoyed their week-end in the country. After they had been gone some time, someone smelled smoke. Checking about the house, they found that Charley's and Lee's room was on fire. They commenced drawing water from the well and formed a fire brigade, but they couldn't get it out. Their house burned to the ground. Fortunately, there were no injuries.

Afterwards they were talking about how it could have started. It started in Uncle Charley's room. You know how he always has a big cigar going. He wanted us to build a new house. You don't suppose....?

John White built a big new house that year, 1917, a little sooner than he had expected.



Charley Dabbs wasn't a big man, but he always looked taller than he actually was. He had a proud bearing and when he spoke his voice was full of self-assurance. He dressed the part of a gambler in some old movie, with his bowler hat, string tie and diamond stickpin. He was very proud of his gold watch and chain, from which dangled an Elks fob that always attracted notice. The gold fob had an embossed elk on the front that had two small diamonds embedded in the animal's eyes. Elsewhere on the piece was a rather large ruby, three very nice diamonds and some sort of blue stone worked into the emblem of the fraternity. He also had other emblems and lapel pins from the other organizations of which he was a member, but his watch and Elks fob was his favorite. He tended to be flamboyant, yet he was good-hearted and generous to those he loved. He must have missed a close family relationship when he was growing up for he adopted his wife's family as his own. He loved his brother-in-law, John White, as if they were blood brothers. He and Lee both thought of John's older children as the family they never were able to have, although they were around the younger set less and thus became less attached to them.

Charley died September 28, 1918 and was buried at Magnolia Cemetery in Meridian. He was sorely missed by Lee Dabbs.

With Charley gone, Lee Dabbs didn't know what to do with herself for a time. She still had a chauffeur, though Bud was gone and had been replaced by a boy named Johnny. She - nor Charley, either - had ever learned to drive a car, but Johnny drove her about in her long light-colored Essex touring car to wherever she wished to go. Charley had invested well for Lee and she still kept her maid and Annie, the cook. But there didn't seem to be anything that really interested her to help pass the days.

Around 1927 Lee thought that she would like to build a summer retreat in the country, a sort of camphouse, where she could come and spend time and plant flowers, get away from town. After the crops were laid by one summer she enlisted the help of John's older sons and picking out a site on the farm, the boys, using mules and dirt slips, built her a fishpond. The pond, which was fed from natural springs that were in the area, had a pipe through the dam that could be opened to fill a small concrete swimming pool that she had built below. She had a small, rustic camphouse built and stained barn red, and dressing-rooms built alongside the swimming pool.

The camphouse was in a wooded area that was at the base of the hill that led up from the flat bottom along Rogers Creek. The woods and hillside abounded with wild ferns and suggested to Lee the name of her summer place; Fern Hill Camp. ~~She spent many happy hours at Fern Hill.~~

Lee Dabbs spent many happy hours as Fern Hill, always improving, working, planting, making bowers and woodland glens. Fern Hill became her playhouse.

Lee Anna Dabbs died on October 13, 1958 and was buried beside Charley in Magnolia Cemetery.



(Star staff photo . . . David P. . .)

Work on the new educational building of Jones Memorial Presbyterian church was started Monday. It is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

Ground was broken Sunday in preparation for the construction of a \$28,000 building immediately back of the present structure.

Mrs. C. H. Dabbs, the oldest member of the congregation, turned the first spade of dirt. Looking on are left, Otis Neal, chairman of the building committee and the Rev. R. G. Schwanebeck, pastor. The impressive ceremony, held between the Sunday school and church service, included a Bible selection, prayer and brief remarks by the Rev. Mr. Schwanebeck.